The Music of the Spheres

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Bertram Lincoln Shapleigh

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The Music of the Spheres

And Other Verses

By

Bertram Lincoln Shapleigh

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"Such harmony is in immortal souls
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

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In Preparation:

Mystical Symbology of Color.
The Coming of the Bride.
The Celestial Drama.

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"The Music of the Spheres."

PART I.

The Meeting.

Back in the early days, when the soft airs
The great god Pan had piped were not forgotten,
When reeds taught music to the charméd ear
And all the wealth of sound was pure and new
As infant in man's heart; back in the days,
When every maid was wooed with silver strains
Of pleading flute, and answered to the suit
In golden harp chords, when the air of Greece
Breathed with the unborn race of later gods;
Back in the distant marvel age of earth,
When man beheld the world as very fair,
And loved to lay his breast on nature's breast
And learn of her. In that far distant age

There lived a youth born in the sunny wilds
Of woody wildernesses. Here he came
To early manhood learning as he grew
The secrets that lie deep in nature's heart
And which she grants to those who dwell with her.
He came and went throughout his woody home
Companioned with its beasts and birds, and oft
Those wondrous people who inhabited
The woods and streams or dwelt up in the hills,
And beings whom man's eye hath seldom seen,
Came forth to consort with him. In this way

He with the spirit of the ancient Pan
Had long dwelt conning all of music's art
And from the old god many things he learned
And many secrets which throughout the world
No man now knows and few could understand.
From out a reed cut from the forest growth
He fashioned him a pipe like to that brought
Into the world by Hermes who had taught

The old Egpytians how to make the Nile
Soft and sweet with music.

Note by note
Our youth cut out the frets until he reached
The octave where sound doubles on itself
And is complete. He learnt what secrets lay
Concealed within his art, and how the scale
Explains the universe and dwells concealed
In every soul.

Companioned by his flute
He went his way through wood and over mount.
By day he tuned his melodies to play
The call of birds, the laugh of merry streams,
The stir of woody ways, the startling gleams
Of sunlight tumbling down all through the green;
And every happy thing that joyed in life
Found echos in his playing.

Then at night
He purled his notes forth to the moon and stars,
And to the spirit of the universe,
And to the presence of the unseen gods.
By day he wove his strains from five clear notes,
At night two more crept in, — the two that sound
Only to ears that have grown wise to hear, —
The two that may not sound in all the world.

From town to town he went and taught the dance,
And taught the songs of water nymphs and niads,
The carollings of Bacchus and the chants
That afterwards became the mighty hymns
Heard in Olympus. Then ofttimes he'd play
What human hearts in these our later days
Conceal so well.

And those who heard him sat
Wrapt in the spell of hearing till they found

Springing to music, leaping into sound,
What they had treasured in their hearts for years.
And their sweet secret melted into tears.

One day, when tired Phœbus homeward drove
His fiery steeds down the steep western sky
Into the thunder palace rising stern
And mighty all along the water's edge,
Our hero sat piping a merry glee
To tune the flying feet of dancing maids
Who tripped the jocund vintage hours along.

All through the golden locks the autumn light
Played games of forfeit where the smile kissed smile
Then hid itself away for fear it might
Have blushed through all its burnished gold ere while.
And when he ceased to breathe upon the flute
It seemed the music still played o'er his face

And ran to eddying dimples, while his mute
Unspeaking voice in his clear eyes found place.
Many a wreath and garland had been strung
For him, and many maidens fair and young
Had crowned him Prince Apollo, — many eyes
Amourously tender lit the ecstacies
Of his outpouring song. His pleading flute
Had taught a sad key to full many a lute
That virgin fingers plucked at in the groves,
And his soft playing mingled with the loves
Of clustering songsters carolling aloft
In mists of perfume, where so warm and soft
The breeze woos out the sweetness of the flowers.

Thus as he sat and poured his melody
Upon the throbbing air, the sun went down,
The stars one at a time unclosed their eyes
And set their watch, but ere the first appeared
Two star bright eyes lit through the twilight hour

And told their portent clearer than had e'er
Come omen from revolving orbs on high.

Those maiden orbs revolved about his soul
And beamed down love from its meridian.

* * * * * * *

Stars on stars above,
Stars on stars below
In lake and rivulet reflect their light;
Yonder is love of love,
Here we only know
Reflected love as day reflects the night.

Stars burn deep in the sky,
Stars burn deep in the sea,
Higher than we may reach, deeper than we may feel;
Love though ever so high
Ever so low must be,—
Free to the grasp of our strength, bound by no zeal.

* * * * * * *

So played he on and wove the magic woof
Of night,and heaven,and earth,and love,and sound,
Wove himself into the magic mesh,
And wove it to the pattern of a song
Those eyes inspired,— and he wound it round
About her soul, until the night, and heav'n,
And earth, and love, and sound became alive
And lived in her as all things live in love
And have a body in the object loved.

Each of her senses answered to the call
Of liquid lulling notes that in their fall
Shimmered in seas of color. Slow her will
Clasped in its arms with an ecstatic thrill
The joy of love. Then like the gentle play
Of apple blossoms on the breast of May,
There came a hovering fragrance and the touch
Of spirit tenders that would open such
A world beyond life's idle, wasteful stir.

Her five low senses slumbered, yet there were
Two others making, two that see and hear
The soul of what the rest are grasping at;
The two that touch with truth and hold the power
Of sending a prompting from within when comes
A gleam of truth along the other five.
So lay she listening to him as he played,
Listening in the way that love would list
To love that was not spoken, so she wist
Of music which he felt but could not play,
For human ears to hear in human way.
And she made answer in the same strange way
Love has of giving answer unto love.

The notes pearled forth like drops of molten dew
That had been tears before some angels kiss
Had turned them into music, soft they came
Seeking the answer love alone could give.
And when his music ceased she sprung to him,

And threw her arms about his neck and hung
Devouring his presence, each fond glance
Linked in the others, while four lips, love dumb,
Lacking a word, resolved themselves in one.
Then drawing back as though to mark the man
In his entire wholeness, and to view
The form and features of the one she loved,
She let her words leap forth as fountains spring
Over a mountain turret, coming down
With bridal veil of mist and jewels bright
And with a rainbow girdle at its zone.
Her rich, sweet voice gave forth its sparkling words
Like rapture light that leapt from out her eye.

"O, love! what are these melodies thou play'st
That others may not play, how may'st thou tune
Thy flute to touch two notes that never sound
With other's playing? See, 'tis like our love
Which holds the earth and earth-made pleasure in't

And something somewhat higher, like two notes
That none but us may know, two notes that hold
The power of resolving all the rest."
He took her hands and drew her down again
And asked her how she heard him play these notes
She had not known before, for it is oft
As great to have the power to behold
As 'tis to have the skill to give it out.

"How do I hear? How do I know these notes?
They pierce me like the glowing of thine eyes
Like sob of sorrow and the smile of joy;
Or like the pang of grief and thrill of love;—
And when I stop to listen they are gone
And thou hast wandered on to other keys."

He answered, "Loved one, thou hast let two notes
Creep to thine ear that others have not known,
Thy love hath wooed a heavenly echo forth

From out the melody that sprang from earth,
Thou hearest what thou hast not heard before
In other's playing — for no instrument
Can give them forth, as no man's finger yet
Hath found the fret that can provoke the sound
Thine ear hath caught. No, nor can I command
This poor pipe which I hold to bring them forth,—
They had not sounded for another's ear.
They are the silent tones which none may hear,
That none may play save in their soul of souls;
They hold the secret of the scale concealed
Within themselves, as life and death contain
The secret of the universe we see
And will not give it up to man till he
Shall hear the seven harmonies that play
Through all the spheres.
Five keys my fingers know,
That is the scale the gods allow to us,
Who mounts to seven sees somewhat beyond,

And by the aid of them should understand
The language of the gods, for grief and love
Are not more powerful than these two notes
When rightly found and heard in silent way.
Thy soul hath clasped the form of my own soul;
The music of my life rings in thy life;
Joy and sorrow in a molten stream
Flow to the mould of love.
Thou here hast heard
The music of the soul which sings within,
Where all things are resolved in perfect bliss,
And where I place thee as my spirit's bride."
And then she knew that she had found in him,
By some deep way, what others might not find.
And she went forth with him, and as he played,
His music wove the hours of many days
Into the woof and texture of their love.
And as he tuned his secrets on his flute
She answered by response from eye and lip.

The fleet winged months flew by, and she with him
Wandered afar throughout that mystic land,
Which was to be the playground of the gods
When they should leave their cradle in the east.
O'er many wooded mounts they took their way,
And rested 'neath thick roofs of clustering vine;—
The mount would be a gods abode someday,
And where they sate would rise a wayside shrine.
The path their steps found out would someday lead
The pilgrim on his quest with shoeless foot,
The conqueror upon his prancing steed,
Or some lone minstrel wand'ring with his lute.

They sought the vale of Tysus where there dwelt
An ancient hermit who was known afar
As great and good. In his lone habitude
The twain would seek to share his company
And let his wisdom sanctify their love.

PART II.

The Vale of Tysus.

'Twas evening in the valley when they came
Over the uplands, down across the fields.
The great trees stretched their shadows out as
    though
Their spirits had crept forth to gently reach
Over the flowering turf to close the day
With benediction. Then the sun went down,
And like a mighty bomb that bursts and sends
Its fiery fragments through the air, so now
Through all the sky there shot long streams of gold,
And soft hued surfaces sailed high, begemed
And fringed with flaming brilliance.

Here it seemed
The rapture of the dawn blushed forth again

And cheek and cheek of night and day lay close
Burning and blushing, holding near again
What morning took away. Through the half glow
Of twilight, silent raptures sped to man,
Leaving the earth and sky to find his heart
And lay their beauties cradled in his breast.

One silent palm against the wide blue sky,
The new and nacent moon, and one star under,
Long deep stretch of ancient woods, that lie
Like some great sleeping army stored with plunder.
The damp sweet smell of the evening's hush,
The rich smell of damp and the cool peaceful pause,
In the west the firebrand's kindling flush
At the funeral pyre of the day that was.
  Her throne on earth,
    Her coronal on high,
  The mother-queen of night
    Is drawing nigh

Inveloped in the robes the silent earth
At dew-fall wears,
Half tints, soft hanging o'er the hearth
Of day, and pairs
Of star beams looping up the many folds
Of her prophetic garments dimly hued,
With just the spirit that the flower holds
Deep in its color, which the twilight wooed
To blend with all the tender shades that lay
In its soft music which no pipe could play.

Afar the night takes stand —
Womanly grand,
Looking how far, how far,
From earth to star
With its deep virgin blue;
Kissing to sleep the eyes
Of tired and true
Virgin mother wise.

Down in the valley at its farthest end,
Some stern revolt in nature had thrown down
A lofty cliff, and piled the mammoth rock
Against a brother cliff, and round them grew
Large, ancient trees, that held the boulders back
From rolling down the incline to the brook
That found its way by many secret turns
Across the valley. Here amid the rocks
High piled, an entrance led into a cave,
Wide and capacious, running back into
The mountain body. Here the rev'rend sage
Had his abode. Here years had grown him to
A harmony with rock, and field, and wood,
So that he seemed their voice, and spoke in tones
As pure and simple as the mountain's brook
Tells to the flowers gathered on its banks
Of mountain glories, and the heights above,
Or as the ancient forest trees bend down
And hold soft converse with the springing shrub.

Here with this man the twain let pass their days,
And love grew full beneath the holy shade
Of such a presence. And on one great night
When all the heavens spread themselves o'er earth
With such resplendance that it seemed the hour
Would force the meadow flowers to awake
And throw their petals open to the stars,

They wedded, and the holy, soft-breathed vows
Of their united souls, fell on the air
Like some star-perfume dropped by spirit hand.
The evening breezes wooed it o'er the fields
And down into the trembling stillness of
The valley, where the little brook run on
As promise that all else would wake again,
And know what had passed near them in their
dreams.

The year rolled round, still o'er the sacred vale
The wondrous flute notes fell, still through the air

The words of love were wafted too and fro.
But she had found some want, and in her face
There grew a wistful look, as though the soul
Quested some treasure, doubtful where it be.
She had no speech to say what she would say,
She did not name her loss, for she knew not
The meaning of it nor yet how it went.
Days passed until she could no longer bide
In silence — now must she confess her woe.

Softly she came, and kneeling down by him
Sought his kind look through eyes that had grown dim
With tears. How could she tell to him the truth?
How would he answer? Then she took his hand
Held it in hers until he felt the thought
Of trouble in her. Bending low he laid
A kiss upon her brow, and bade her speak
And tell him of her grievance. Then she bowed

Her head upon his knee,— looked up again
Into his clear bright face and said,
"My dear,
There are two notes I can no longer hear,
Thy strain seems dull, thy song all incomplete;
Thy flute speaks not such things as once I heard.
I listen, listen, and the farther off
Seems every strain to go that once did throw
A magic chain about me, held me fast
Unto the sweet notes as a part of thee.
Now you play up and down and mark the scale
Of silver notes with gentle rhythms, but there,—
There is its ending, and strain as I will,
I cannot reach to hear the charméd strain
Thou once gav'st out to me; and in my heart
I feel in losing this there lies some hint
That I have also lost some part of thee.
Dearest, take up thy pipe and play for me
The music of our meeting hour again."

Over his youthful face there came the calm,
Soft hand of resignation, plucking out
The tender bloom, and leaving in its stead
The tranquil sorrow love-loss ever knows.
Such blanchéd pallor as spreads o'er the man,
Who, flying to the bosom of his bride
Presses his lips on hers, but finds that death
Has kissed her first.
Slowly he raised the pipe
And slowly, softly crept the soundings forth.

First played he as he did the hour he came
Across the mountains to the valley where
He first had met her, then he piped the same
Gay, tripping measures and the same bright airs
That set the beatings of the dance apace,—
That vintage hour in the autumn light.

Then came the melodies that he had spun
That evening as they first gave eyes to eyes,

And voice to voice, and lips to lips, such-wise
As lovers do in their first ecstacies,—
At length 'twas done. But no, she had not heard
What he had played as he had played them then.
Merry and sweet they were, these tunes of his,
But lacking, O, so much they once possessed.

He took her in his arms and gently said:
"It was by those two notes I wedded thee
Because thou had'st an ear and heard in this,
My playing, what no other ever heard,
I knew thou hadst the power to also know
The corresponding soundings in my soul,—
And this it was that linked us man and wife.
Thou cans't not hear these notes; some veil has
flung
Its folds about thy sight, and now no more
Thou knowest me."
Silent they sat, no word

Could dare find voice, at last he took her hand
And holding the fair fingers tried to smile,
And then went out,— leaving the flute behind.

Left alone she threw herself upon
The current of her tears, and let them lead
The way to consolation. Starting up,
She called his name aloud. He could not hear,—
The wood birds and the mountain wonders now
Engrossed his soul. The wood-gods marked his way;
The strange companions of his childhood's days
Whispered about him as he passed them by;
Many a sorcery of nature sought
To win him back to consorts of the past
Where he roamed free among the mystic folk.

A year had passed. Still dwelt she in the vale.
The sage consoled her,— tended her so much
As she had needs.
Her wave of sorrow now

Was crested with a joy and she had smiled,—
As stricken brides may smile upon their child.
Her child she held — her child — the joy that came
To slay forgetfulness of other joys
That had been hers with all their sweet delights.
And in the child she found a unity
Of life and death, of rapture and of pain,—
It was love's little self born to the world,
The child of joy and pain as love must be.

Hanging upon her neck by chubby arms
To hold her low and tender to love's self.
As love must teach to soar and yet to bend,
And not forget how wisdom lieth low,
And near the heart of things.
Thus as she sat,
She idly took the pipe that once she'd heard
Pleading its master's love, when he had come
And found her in that golden vintage time.

She took it up and fingering o'er the keys
Gave breath to it, and wooed the silver tones
To sound for her.
Now note by note she found
The leadings to some little melody,
That pleased her in the finding, and the babe
Looked up, and wondered at the plaintive tune
She voiced thereon. Then came the ancient one,
And smiled to hear the beauties she had found
Untutored on the flute that had been still
So many days.

PART III.

The Return.

But how had fared our youth?
Where had he wandered, and what other joys
Had held him far from where his joy had died?
Far had his path led on, until he reached
The busy mart of human trade, and there
He mixed with those who came and those who went,
And sought to find what happiness in man
Caused him to value life. Yet where he went
There came no one who wore the word content
Upon his brow. He heard the poets read
How woman was the glory of the man,
And though the earth were lost and she were gained
As his eternal prize, the loss were well,
The having all complete. Yet he met not
The man who had so found his total want
In woman's love repaid.

Among the priests
He went to hear the wisdom of the east,
And questioned them of love, and if man found
On earth such answer from another soul
As would content him from all other want.
And they explained how when two souls shall meet
Whom God intendeth shall be one in love,
They blend, and make the broken arch complete.
How woman is the answer to the man;
How he is but a symbol in the half,
Requiring her who shall fill up the sign
And make it read at once from first to last,
A perfect thing. She answers as the rhyme
To ev'ry act of his. So they grow one
By blending, mixing, fusing, setting forth
Alone such difference as is revealed
In rhyme and rhyme, or as we may behold
In word and tone, in silence and in sound.
For music is the smile which silence bears

Upon its sweet calm features, when its heart
It rapture stirred. So woman is the light
And music of man's life when in his heart
Love wakeneth. Alike in complement
That fills the round each had begun alone,
But which alone they never could surround.
One to reflect the other so that each
May see self plainer in the complement.
But few attain to find this truth of love,
They lose each other in the happiness
That follows meeting, there they soon forget
To search those depths that love hath led them to.
If they would hold the glory of their love,
It must have more than its own happiness
To live upon."
Some wisdom moved him here.
Their words awoke a little sense of guilt,
As though perchance the fault were not all her's;
Perhaps she understood as much in him

As he did of himself, and had he stayed
He might have led her back to knowledge of
What he had deemed she would perceive no more.
At this he was determined to return.
He would go back to her and try again
If she could not perceive what once she did.
He'd play again upon that pipe for her
And surely she would some way find it out,—
All this that she had failed to grasp of him;
Yes, she would know him now as he returned
As he would fain be known, something would be
In her that now would hear as ne'er before
What he should sound within, and ask her soul
To set the perfect harmony thereto.

Thus thinking, and with ev'ry hope at heart,
He found his way back through the mountain heights
To the lone vale with eager tremblings.
As love comes to the beauteous grave of love,

And calls love forth, and loudly calls her name,
And bids love rise, for he is not yet dead,
So came he now, and as he neared the shrine,
Where to his way was made, at each new step
His spirit louder called the name of love,
And feared least love should not arise again
To greet him,— would not hear his ardent voice
However he might call her back to life.
Around the uplands bordering the plain
He took his way, and reached the heights above
The rugged cliff, where he might see below,
Or hear the voices as they rose to him.

What sound is that he hears? What gentle tone
Is creeping up to him? 'Tis like the hush
That rises from the earth at even tide,
Or like the cool damp of that peaceful pause
The earth sends out at dew-fall. It is like
The voice of some rare bird that was possessed

Of human soul, and unto him it seemed
The soul was like to woman's, and the voice
Like some sweet wonder fallen 'gainst the earth
In taking flight from some more royal star.
It ceases, then again as though the joy
Of singing forth its life could not be stayed,
The notes spring forth. Enraptured by the sound
He pauses in his way to hear them creep
Up and down, and weave themselves into
A melody in which there seemed to hide
The spirit of some all unuttered joy
Flowing through the veins of human grief;
As though some tender spirit had resolved
Its joys and its griefs into a song,
Which fed upon the soul that gave it forth.

What does he hear? What wondrous tones are these?

Who sounds these notes,— these that no man shall find,—
That none shall waken save the gods that hold
Man just so much below them in the scale?

Now it came to him that some wanderer
Had likely passed that way, and so had stopped
And played to those below, as he once played,
As he once strove to play, but who played now
Possessed a power beyond that which he knew,
And drew a magic from the realm of tone
He had not made to sound. Where had he failed?

Could he have sounded thus the hidden notes
As yon sweet player does, would not her ears
Have heard their fill of what they longed to hear
Yet heard not? Might there not have been in him
Some lack that held the music of his soul
From reaching hers; or might there not have been
Some mute that muffled what he strove to sound?

He pushed his way ahead down through the crags
Until he reached the rocky precipice
About the cave. Still nearer did he draw
So that the stars might light for him the group
That there were clustered. Nearer, nearer still,
That he might see the player, who he was,
And might behold her, were she also there,
And mark how she would listen, if the strain
Should reach her as did his so long ago.
Softly he creeps so near that should he part
The herbage that concealed him he would stand
Plainly before them. What is this he hears?
The light laugh of a child, some tender voice
And sound of little kisses like to those
The mother gently leaves upon her babe
For fear of bruising it with too much love.
He gazes forth.
The mother's lips have now
From kisses back to music found their way.

Music, that is love searching for a word,—
And in her lap uplooked the little word;
The only word that love was meant to speak—
Love that is silent and must fail of words.

Note after note unwound her melody,
As human bodies might unroll themselves
Like mummy cloths and let the soul stand out,
That if the next soul chanced to pass that way
They should behold and know each other there.
So stood she as the soul, and so he saw
As he had never seen her in the past,
As he had never known she could be seen.

* * * * * * *

Whose arm was it that now encircled her
With tender holding? Well she knew the touch
Its gentle pressure gave, and silently
She let herself recline into its hold,
And bound that loving arm about her waist

As 'twere girdle of her womanhood.

"Hast thou returned?" "Hast thou come back indeed?"
Thus murmured she as though she spoke in dreams
Where some lost ecstacy had come to her
And tempted her to trust it all were true.

"I have come back," he answered, "I am here,
But did not think to find what I have found.
Thus planned I as I came to seek for thee;
I said unto myself along the way,
'She will be like the dawn that night has taught
What day caused to forget, and when we meet
I'll woo her soul to hear what mine would say
And both shall break their silence with such song
As once they knew.' But now I come to hear
In thy sweet tuning what has been in me,
What I prayed thee to hear, and thou, my bride,

Have given back myself to me in strains
Such as I could not quite give out to thee.
While I had sought that thou shouldst know me well
And miss no depth of me, I was content
To have thy love, meanwhile thy loving self
Went undiscovered. Now how much I find.
How well I know how thou hast fathomed me
Since what I failed to make thee understand
Thou hast discovered in thine own wise way.
And caused me to behold."

Then spoke the sage
"I have not known the bliss of human love,
I have not mingled with the heart of man,
And never woman shared her thought with mine;
But I touch souls with God and so may grasp
The same truth that is law of love and earth.

To know of God as we should know of him
Sorrow must be our guide as well as joy.

As day to day gives speech, so it is writ
The night to night conferreth knowledge. It
Was sweet to dream thine hours in the arms
Of each one's own desired, sweet it was
And blissful to be near the one that held
Thine utmost joy, but pleasure throws, unseen,
Many a veil about the sight of those
Reclining on her bosom, turns their eyes
To view herself and lose the vision of
That object which had led them into joy.
So thou didst in the first reveal thyself
Most wholly to the sight of thy beloved,
And she with ardent, eager vision saw
The beautiful and god-like part of thee.
Then came the pause. Then love endured the bliss,
Yes, the excess of bliss that held thee from
The higher flights thy two souls might have found.
The form and form, the touch, the look of each,
The word, the presence made up what would be

Content to each. Like to those men who place
False idols up and bow to worship them,
And bring them incense and all precious gifts
As offering, is he who from love's self,
Which is a spirit, turns and seeks to find
His quest wrapt in the flesh,— like he who turns
Away from touch of souls to touch of lips
And is content to kiss the form he holds
Nor seeks the surer, more eternal source.
Fail thou didst to hold what thou had won
And went away, then sorrow fell upon
The soul of her you left, and through the night
That reached between thy going and return,
She grew to find the deeper source of life,
And through her sorrow she found power to rise
Into the knowledge of one step beyond
Where thou hadst left her.
Then there came a joy.
In grief she bore this little child. Behold!

How it would pluck the stars as though they were
Like love and heav'n so very near to it.
This was the joy that taught her in a way
No other joy could teach, what was the depth
Of human happiness. Here lay the two,—
The greatest sorrow is the loss of love,
The greatest joy a woman's soul can know
Lies in her child, and so again she rose
Gaining the second step, and now she stood
With understanding of the two great keys
Of joy and sorrow, two that hold the sum
Of human life. Thou hast returned to her
And find her playing to the wond'ring babe
What she had failed to understand from thee.
Tis well thou comest."
Then he took the babe
And let it push its palms into his eyes,
And who may tell what it awoke in him
To feel their warmth.

In silence sat the twain.
Only the little leaves stirred in their sleep,
And sound of trees that in the upper air
Leant cheek to cheek. High in the zenith shone
The seven soft stars of the Pleiades.

THE END.

The Quest of the Beautiful.

I.

I feel the song I cannot sing,
I hear the strain I cannot write,
I see the flight I may not wing
Through the dark night.

II.

There are long poems I cannot pen,
Great apprehensions through me move,
And my dumb being, without voice
Pours out its love.

* * * * * * *

III.

Rapturous is the kiss
  When Idea meeteth Form,
From such love as this
  All earth's art is born.

IV.

In the scratch of pens,
  In the lap of brushes,
What tremendous ecstacy
  As thought to substance rushes.

V.

From the master's spirit
  Art's great works are springing,
We may hear it, see it,—
  In his heart the clinging.

VI.

We may have his song,
  But much shall be missing;
We may read his love,—
  In his heart the kissing.

* * * * * * *

VII.

Something is strangely appealing,
  Something is lovingly near,
Its pulse I am almost feeling—
  Its voice I can almost hear.

VIII.

Forever and ever appealing
  Till I bring forth in some way,
All the wondrous truths and revealings
  That rise up in me today.

IX.

The beautiful dream hangs low
  Like the veil o'er a saintly shadow,
And the life I feel and know
  Is like August throbbing in meadows.

X.

The yearning, the longing has fled,
  I can sense the breath of the day,
While I am surrounded and led
  Aloft by thoughts that pray.

XI.

Around me the voices of flowers,
  Before me lies unfurled
The glint and the glamour and sunshine
  Of poes'y glory world.

XII.

And over my day there settles
  As over a young god's youth
The glow of that after-world
  That lies between us and truth.

* * * * * * *

XIII.

What bids me leap forth to the world,
  What fills me full of song?
I ne'er have felt such power nor known
  That I could grow so strong.

XIV.

Is inspiration flowing in
  And bidding me to speak,
Or is my soul just bursting forth
  Forgetting I am weak?

XV.

I know the infinite rapture,
I cling to eternity,
Till the stars in their deep abysses
See down the abyss of me.

XVI.

Press my lips on the lips of heaven
And gaze in the suns that role,
Till I thrill with the joy of the angels
And throb with the first great soul.

XVII.

My spirit has lost its bondage,
And rising from its clod
It trembles through the heavens
And copies the thoughts of God.

* * * * * * *

XVIII.

Man stands as the great God
  Stands back of all glorious things,
Not the poem, the painting, the song,
  But the truth which they word, paint or sing.

XIX.

Not the moon, nor the dew, nor the stars,
  The flow'rs, the wood, nor the river,
Nor any beautiful thing
  Is God, but he is their giver.

XX.

The beauty lies not in the work
  But deep in the heart that divined it,
The world is so very fair
  Because God is standing behind it.

XXI.

Beauty touches the soul
  Because it is born of feeling,
Some soul was striving to speak
  And the work was the soul's revealing.

XXII.

For all souls were born in beauty
  Nor lose they the sense of their starting,
Forever it glideth with them,
  Forever their birth is imparting.

XXIII.

A light o'er the objects they pass
  That adds to the radiance of it;
A knowledge of something in us
  That is one with the beauty we covet.

* * * * * * *

XXIV.

The Eternal Good is in man
  The semblance, the form is without;
Art is the being of man
  Everywhere searching about.

XXV.

For color and form and tone,
  Feeling what body expresses
In all its movements and beauty,
  Its grandeur and grace so much less is

XXVI.

Than what man would have man to say,
  Than what man would show unto man.
He seeketh some means to portray
  What he feels of God's wonderful plan.

XXVII.

And man's deep joy in beauty
Springs forth from the beauty in him,
The eternal and endless beauty
Which no change cometh to dim.

XXVIII.

The beauty throughout the earth
In nature's perfect plan,
And every delightful worth
Are rays shot forth from man.

* * * * * * *

XXIX.

We read of the word-made flesh
In which God's spirit stirred,
But we never shall read man right
Till the flesh has become the word.

XXX.

The sum of all beauty lies
  In the glow of a pure woman's love
For the love of a woman on earth
  Is the blessing of Mary above.

* * * * * * *

XXXI.

And this beauty, that beauty, all beauty,
  Dissect it, explain it who can?
There is no measure of nature,
  The earth is the mirror of man.

XXXII.

All that is found in art
  Is found in the human soul,
The songs of the human heart
  Are weaving through its whole.

XXXIII.

The tender growing of green,
The passion and fire of red,
The quiet hush of the blue
When poppy time is dead.

XXXIV.

The anxious and restless yellow
Leading its unending quest,
Striving, forever striving,
Yearning and leading for rest.

XXXV.

Forever and ever searching
In a long and endless flight,
Seeking for truth, not knowing
It holds its own golden light.

XXXVI.

The discord that waits to find peace,
  The one note that yearns o'er the rest
Waiting one under to sound
  That it may repose on its breast.

XXXVII.

The fire repelling us from
  The blue arch we seek to enter,
Ever the nearer to draw
  Into its infinite centre.

XXXVIII.

So sings each soul away,
  And the secrets it would be concealing,
To the eye to the ear each day
  Art and nature are ever revealing.

* * * * * * *

XXXIX.

Give me of dark death and dying,
Till dying and death be done,
Till the lives through which I am flying
Shall bring life's victory won!

XL.

On through the sleeping and waking,
The round of giving and taking.
Whence we have come not knowing,
Still toward the beautiful going,
Out of the wonderful past,
Out of the ages vast,
Into eternal youth,
On to the dawn of truth.

XLI.

Give me of dark death and dying
Till dying and death be done;
Till the little lives I am living
Merge into the Infinite One.

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